A

SERMON

On occaſion of the

DEATH

OF

Grey Neville Eſq;

Preach'd *May* the 5th 1723.

By JEREMIAH HUNT.

The SECOND EDITION.

LONDON,

Printed for S. BILLINGSLEY, at the *Judge's-Head* in *Chancery-Lane*; and ſold by A. DODD at the *Peacock* without *Temple-Bar*, R. FORD at the *Angel* in the *Poultrey*, and J. NOON at the *White-Hart* in *Cheapſide*. MDCC. XXIII.

A SERMON

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BRITISH MUSEUM

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TO

Henry Grey Esq;

The following

DISCOURSE

Preach'd on occasion of the

DEATH

Of his BROTHER

Grey Neville Esq;

And publish'd by direction of his LAST WILL, is, with due respect, inscribed by

His most humble,
and obedient
Servant,

J. HUNT.

TO

Henry Grey Esq;

The following

DISCOURSE

Preach'd on occasion of the

DEATH

OF his Brother

Grey Neville Esq;

And published by direction of his LAST
WILL, is, with due respect, inscribed by

His most humble,

and obedient

Servant,

J. HUNT.

BRITISH MUSEUM

[redacted]

A PREFACE TO THE READER.

THE modeſty of the gentleman deceaſed, was the reaſon why no attempt was made to draw his character.

TO remove the ſurprize, which 'tis natural to ſuppoſe that thoſe who read this ſermon will readily fall into, when they find nothing ſaid of him, it is thought proper that the clauſe of his LAST WILL *relating to this ſermon ſhould be printed.*

I GIVE to my reverend friend Mr. *Jeremiah Hunt*, paſtor to the congregational church at *Pinners-hall*, the ſum of —— to preach a ſermon on the laſt verſe of the firſt chapter of *James*: *Provided* he makes no mention of my name in the ſaid ſermon. I would have it printed.

THAT the diſcourſe may be ſucceſsful to promote pure and undefiled religion, is my ſincere deſire and hearty prayer.

BRITISH MUSEUM

J. H.

[redacted]

JAMES I. 27.

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to viſit the fatherleſs and widows in their affliction, and to keep himſelf unſpotted from the world.

THE author of this epiſtle, in the general opinion of the antients, was an apoſtle, the brother of our Lord, and probably the ſame with him who was ſtyl'd the Juſt, and was biſhop of *Jeruſalem*. And ſince he was an apoſtle of the * circumciſion, he directs it † *to the twelve tribes which are ſcattered abroad*, and addreſſes as well to ‡ the unbelieving *Jews* as to thoſe who were converted to the chriſtian religion.

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* Gal. 2. 9. † Ver. 1. ‡ Vid. *Grot.*

THE deſign of the epiſtle in a great meaſure, is to rectify their erroneous ſentiments of religion, and cure the irregular and vicious practices which too generally prevailed among them; for which reaſon the apoſtle in our text gives a deſcription of true religion: *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to viſit the fatherleſs and widows in their affliction, and keep himſelf unſpotted from the world.*

THE *Greek* term θρησκεία, here tranſlated religion, is deriv'd from the *Thracians*, among whom 'tis reported *Orpheus* introduced numerous ceremonies, which were uſed in worſhipping their gods; and afterwards the expreſſion was made uſe of to ſignify * worſhip, or the manner wherein the ſupreme Being is to be ſerved. It is uſed ſometimes in a bad and ſometimes in a good ſenſe. Our apoſtle joins with it other words to fix and determine its meaning: † *If any man among you ſeem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue but deceiveth his own heart, that man's religion is* vain. And pure religion and undefiled.

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* Vid. *Heſych.* † Verſe 26.

PURE

PURE religion and *undefiled* are expreſſions borrowed from jewels, which are to be clear and free from ſtain to make them genuine, and give them a * value; in like manner, religion which is pure and undefiled, is that religion which is true and unadulterated, that has not improper mixtures to abate or deſtroy its luſtre and worth: and becauſe the knowledge of theſe falſe mixtures will be of conſiderable ſervice to give a clearer view of genuine religion, or, in other words, of ſerving and worſhipping *God even the Father*, in a manner grateful to him;

I. I SHALL lay *them* before you ſo far our apoſtle leads the way, in reference to the *Jews*, to whom he writes; and

II. THEN explain the account he gives of pure religion and undefiled; *To viſit the fatherleſs and widows in their affliction, and keep himſelf unſpotted from the world.*

III. MAKE it appear that herein true religion conſiſts.

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* Vid. *Grot.*

IV. TRACE the moſt material occaſions which have given riſe to undue mixtures in religion.

V. CONCLUDE with proper and ſutable application.

I. I SHALL lay before you the falſe ſentiments which have been entertained of religion, ſo far as our apoſtle leads the way, in reference to the *Jews*, to whom he writes.

(1.) THEY fell into an apprehenſion, that the *belief* of the principles of religion would be ſufficient alone, and unattended with good works, to recommend them to the favour of God, and ſecure their future happineſs. *Thou believeſt that God is one**, and boaſteſt thy ſelf that thou art not an idolater as the fooliſh heathens are, but a worſhipper of the God of *Iſrael*, the maker of heaven and earth, beſides whom there is no other: *Thou doeſt well*; but do not from hence raiſe mighty hopes; for thou herein exceedeſt not the very devils, † *they believe and tremble. Wilt thou know, O*

* Chap. 2. 19. ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς εἷς ἐστι. † Verſe 19.

vain

vain man? vain in laying the weight of thy expectation of acceptance with God and eternal life, on the weak and ſandy foundation of a faith deſtitute of good works; *that faith without works is dead.*

A PERSUASION of mind, (how firm ſoever it be, and tho founded on a train of clear and well connected arguments) that there is one true and living God, to whom every perfection in kind and degree belongs, who exerciſes a kind providence over the beings he has made, and has revealed his will to us; which revelation we entertain, and upon proper evidence, if unaccompanied with a ſutable influence on our determination and conduct, whereby alone we can be beneficial to others, and capable of the happineſs which is agreeable to our make: ſuch a perſuaſion (I ſay) may very fitly be repreſented dead, *i. e.* fruitleſs, inactive, and without life, and * undiſcoverable by others. I am ſenſible how raiſed an opinion you † have of *Abraham* the father of the faithful; in him you pride, and on the account of the privilege of ſo honourable a deſcent, vainly build the expectation of ſharing in the happineſs of the world to come: and was not he ‡ *juſtified by*

* Verſe 18. † Verſe 21. ‡ Verſe 21, 22.

works,

works, when he had offered his ſon *Iſaac* upon the altar? * *Seeſt thou* not *how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?* And be aſſured † that *as the body without the ſpirit is dead, ſo faith without works is dead alſo.* Thus the apoſtle, while he proves that many of the *Jews* placed their religion in faith alone, by arguments very powerful and moſt agreeable to them, effectually refutes the fatal miſtake.

(2.) ANOTHER erroneous opinion of religion, which ſeems to be a conſequence of the former, and which had been entertained by ſeveral, was, that a diligent attention to the divine law, and careful application of mind to gain a clear knowledge of it, would be ſufficient, tho they expreſs'd no concern to have their actions conformable to its rules.

IT cannot be doubted by any, but that 'tis a commendable conduct, when God vouchſafes a diſcovery of his will to his reaſonable creatures, that they ſhould attend with ſutable care and becoming reverence, and by all proper methods conſtantly endeavour to attain as clear an apprehenſion

* Gen. 22. 15. † Verſe 26.

of

of the excellency of his laws, and the happy fruits which arise from a sincere and steddy observance of them; of the fitness of his revelations, the beauty, connection and harmony of their several parts, displaying his inimitable skill in governing men thro all the past ages, as our limited powers and imperfect state will admit. For which reason we are called upon to pursue this knowledge; and the prophet tells us, * that for want of it the people were destroyed: and yet it's equally clear, that our knowledge of the principles of religion (how distinct and extensive soever) terminating in bare speculation, without forming the temper of our minds, and regulating the actions of our lives (the great design of all divine knowledge) will by no means be available to recommend us to the favour of God, or secure our future happiness.

THE error of the contrary opinion lies so obvious, and is so glaring, that some may possibly apprehend that this is a charge merely imaginary, and not a case ever true in fact. But that there were several of the *Jews* who unhappily fell into this mistake, appears undeniably clear; † *But be ye doers of the word, and not* hearers *only, de-*

* Hos. 4. 6. † Jam. 1. 22, 23.

ceiving

ceiving your own ſelves: for if any be a hearer *of the word, and not a doer, he is like to a man beholding his natural face in a glaſs; for he beholdeth himſelf and goeth his way, and ſtrait-way forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoſo* look-eth *into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forget-ful hearer but a doer of the work, this man ſhall be bleſſed in his deed.* Hither we may refer *Rom.* 2. 13. *For not the hearers of the law are juſt before God, but the doers of the law ſhall be juſtified.* * *Behold thou art called a* Jew, *and reſteſt in the law, and makeſt thy boaſt of God;* † *and* knoweſt *his will, and* approveſt *the things that are more excellent, being* in-ſtructed *out of the law.*

(3.) MANY of the *Jews* expected to obtain the favour of God, from inſtructing others in his laws; and in conſequence laid an undue ſtreſs on being doctors and teachers. For this reaſon they affected the character, *deſiring to be teachers of the law,* ‡ *un-derſtanding neither what they ſaid, nor whereof they affirmed*; and on that ac-count, our apoſtle thus addreſſes to them,

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* Verſe 17. † Vid. *Grot.* ‡ 1 Tim. 1. 7.

My

** *My brethren, be not many maſters* or inſtructors ††.

TO be deſirous of ſuſtaining ſuch an office, from a mind ſincerely formed to piety and virtue, and a ſteddy reſolution, in the mildeſt methods, to promote the real felicity of our fellow-creatures, cannot but be look'd upon to be truly laudable; but when 'tis ſuppoſed *that character* will bear us out in immoral and vile practices, and the office is undertaken with a view to the boundleſs and unreſtrained *authority* over the conſciences of others, to which it lays an unreaſonable claim (as was the caſe of the *jewiſh* maſters) 'tis no wonder that the apoſtle *James* adds, *knowing that* thereby *we ſhall receive the greater condemnation.* Neither is it at all ſurprizing that the apoſtle *Paul*, treating on this ſubject, when he had deſcribed the ſelf-ſufficiency * of a *jewiſh* teacher, *And art confident that thou thy ſelf art a guide to the blind, a light of them that are in darkneſs*, thereby intending the gentiles; *an inſtructer of the fooliſh, a teacher of babes*, meaning the proſelytes, *which haſt the form of knowledge*, an exact ſcheme; ſhou'd with ſo becoming a warmth apply, † *Thou which*

** Chap. 3. 1. †† διδάσκαλοι. * Rom. 2. 19, 20, 21. † Verſe 23.

teacheſt another, teacheſt thou not thy ſelf? Thou that makeſt thy boaſt of the law, thro breaking the law diſhonoureſt thou God?

(4.) THE laſt miſtake about religion, which the *Jews* generally run into, and the natural reſult of all the preceding, is an unreaſonable and intemperate zeal for rites and ceremonies. When God choſe the people of *Iſrael*, and ſtood in the relation of a king to them; to guard them from idolatry and introduce the Meſſias, who was to be the Saviour of mankind, diſtinguiſh'd by proper characters previouſly given of him by *Moſes* and the prophets; he enacted variety of ceremonies, which were never deſign'd to ‡ *juſtificaion of life*; ** *for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteouſneſs ſhould have been by the law.*

OUR Redeemer appearing in the fullneſs of time, underwent a painful death; and thereby †† *blotted out the hand-writing of ordinances which was againſt us, and took it out of the way*, nailing *it to the croſs*; ‡‡ alluding by that word to a cuſtom,

‡ Gal. 3. 21. ** Rom. 5. 18. †† Gal. 2. 14.
‡‡ Vid. Grot.

which

which then prevailed among many, of vacating in that manner a law. And the apoſtles, inveſted with authority from him, conſtantly declar'd, that however the *Jews* might conceive of the obligation of regarding circumciſion and the rites of the law, as the peculiar conſtitution of their community, till God ſhould put a final period to it; yet with reſpect to their juſtification to eternal life, faith in the Meſſias influencing their whole conduct, would alone be ſufficient, agreeably to the *original** appointment of God: and that the gentile converts were not under any neceſſity of ſubmitting to them.

NOTWITHSTANDING this, the unbelieving *Jews*, and many of the *jewiſh* converts, had entertained ſo particular a fondneſs for the ceremonies of the law, as with the moſt fiery and outrageous zeal to oppoſe the plain doctrine of chriſtianity, and uſed their utmoſt intereſt with the *Roman* powers to excite and raiſe a perſecution; a practice very frequent amongſt thoſe who embrace miſtaken ſentiments of religion.

THE bitter zeal † which the judaizing teachers expreſs'd in favour of the rites of

* James 1. 25. † James 3. 14.

the law, gave great diſturbance to the churches of Chriſt, which were firſt planted. This occaſion'd their conſtant oppoſition to *Paul*, the apoſtle of the gentiles, who contrary to them, ſteddily maintained that the gentile converts were no way obliged to the obſervance of legal ceremonies.

TO this we are to attribute * envying, emulation, ſtrife and evil ſpeaking, which the apoſtle reproves them for: with a view to this, he diſſuades them from † *ſpeaking evil one of another*; *he that ſpeaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, ſpeaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law*, or ſpeaketh againſt the law as being imperfect, in that it doth not command or condemn thoſe things which thou doſt command or condemn: *But if thou take upon thee to judge the law, thou art not* in thy behaviour as *a doer of the law, but a judge of it*; whereas *there is only one law-giver, who* is able *to ſave and deſtroy: who* therefore *art thou that judgeſt another?* now ‡ *bleſſing God, even the father* of the gentile as well as the *Jew, then curſing* or anathematizing thoſe *who are made after the ſimilitude of God:* be not deceived, ** *if any*

* James 3. 16. † Ch. 4. 11, 12. ‡ Ch. 3. 10.
** Ch. 1. 26.

man

man among you ſeem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue from angry and furious expreſſions, uncharitable and miſchievous contentions, tho the pretenſion be zeal for God, *that man's religion is vain.*

THUS having repreſented the miſtakes which are ruinous to true religion, to which all other erroneous ſentiments concerning religion in its general conſideration, may probably be reduced; I proceed

II. TO explain wherein pure religion and undefiled according to the opinion of the apoſtle conſiſts. And he places it

Firſt, IN beneficence.

Secondly, IN ſelf-purity.

Firſt, IN beneficence: *Pure religion and undefiled before God even the Father, is this, to viſit the fatherleſs and widows in their affliction*, that is, ſuch as are in diſtreſs; with a ſincere deſign to do all the offices which are in the compaſs of our power, to leſſen if not remove their ſorrows, † expreſſing our kind deſires that they may be

† Jam. 2. 16.

re-

relieved, not only in words, but in acts of real goodneſs, and in the moſt tender and obliging manner: *fatherleſs and widows in their affliction*, who are leaſt capable of aſſiſting themſelves, and the moſt diſpirited in trouble, and from whom there is not a proſpect of a return: *fatherleſs and widows in their affliction*, taken in the utmoſt extent, whoever they are, of what nation, religion, and party ſoever they may be, whether friends or enemies, with unmovable conſtancy: whereby theſe acts of goodneſs expreſs'd to them will appear to ariſe from a ſenſe of duty to God, and deſire to reſemble him in being and doing good, and a ſuitableneſs in ſuch a conduct to our preſent ſtate, and to our receiving a reward in another, from *a kind and merciful* Father; and conſequently to imply the duties which relate to our Maker.

THE reaſon why the apoſtle deſcribes pure religion by acts of goodneſs and mercy to the afflicted, is not only becauſe the *Jews* (as their own * hiſtorian remarks) were extremely defective therein, but inaſmuch as they neceſſarily include all the duties which we are obliged to practiſe towards others, *viz.* truth, faithfulneſs,

* Vid. *Joſ. de bello Judaico* p. 1188. *Ed.* Oxon.

and

and juſtice. For this reaſon, when the apoſtle had cautioned them againſt a partial * reſpect of perſons in their conſiſtories for judicature, agreeably to their own canon, *that when the rich and poor have a ſuit together, either both muſt ſit, or both ſtand, to avoid all marks of partiality*; he infers the obligation to this conduct from *the royal law* according to the ſcripture, † *Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thy ſelf*; and with the juſteſt reaſon, for no perſon would be deſpiſed becauſe he is poor, or have a rich man on that account be preferred before him in judgment. This is the firſt thing wherein the apoſtle places pure and undefiled religion, *viz.* beneficence.

II. THE *ſecond*, is ſelf-purity; *and to keep himſelf unſpotted from the world*; which ſtands to expreſs in general the vicious cuſtoms and practices of the world.

OUR Saviour, when he addreſſes the Father for his apoſtles, ſays, ‡ *I pray not that thou ſhouldſt take them out of the world, but that thou ſhouldſt keep them from the evil.* In this ſenſe the apoſtle *Paul* exhorts the chriſtians at *Rome* not

* Jam. 2. 1. † Ver. 8. ‡ John 17. 15.

* *to be conform'd to this world*, and reminds the *Epheſians* of their former converſation *according to the courſe of this world*, before they embraced the chriſtian doctrine. On this account our apoſtle appeals to his brethren, † *Know ye not that the friendſhip of the world is enmity with God? whoſoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God.*

THE full compaſs of this expreſſion we may learn from *John*, an apoſtle of the circumciſion, and writing to the Jews: ‡ *For all that is in the world, the luſt of the fleſh, and the luſt of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. The luſt of the fleſh*: all exceſs of ſenſual pleaſure, ariſing from an undue and immoderate gratification of our appetites; intemperance, and impurity: *the luſt of the eyes*: an ungovern'd deſire of riches to pleaſe our eye, not deſigning to uſe them in a reaſonable way our ſelves, or diſpoſe of any conſiderable part of them to the happineſs of others; ſuch a deſire as draws into it ſelf our chiefeſt views and moſt conſtant purſuits, or breaks thro the ties of humanity and juſtice: *and the pride of life*: an irregular deſire of title, dignity, and honour, ſa-

* Rom. 12. 2. † James 4. 4. ‡ 1 John 2. 16.

crificing

crificing (what is infinitely preferable, and might more juſtly be call'd honour, if we had not loſt too much the propriety of words) probity and a good conſcience to attain them.

TO keep himſelf unſpotted from the world, then, is from a juſt eſtimate of the worth of things, to uſe with moderation the bleſſings of providence which we enjoy; cooly to purſue what at preſent we are not in the poſſeſſion of; and when we attain it, to uſe it for the moſt valuable purpoſe, the honour of our Maker, in promoting our own true happineſs, and the happineſs of our fellow-creatures: in a word, it lies in governing our appetites, and reining our paſſions, in having our lower powers in proper order, and under due command, as it becomes thoſe who bear the character of reaſonable beings capable of reſembling God in righteouſneſs and goodneſs, and oblig'd to expreſs thoſe virtues in our behaviour to others. The phraſe *unſpotted* from the world has a peculiar fitneſs and propriety in it to repreſent govern'd appetites and well-directed paſſions, ſince when they are exorbitant and unruly, ſtains and blemiſhes neceſſarily ariſe to our intelligent nature, and we become geatly polluted. I have no other remark to make under this head, but that to viſit the fatherleſs in

 their

their affliction, and keep himſelf unſpotted from the world, is repreſented pure religion and undefiled *before God*, ſignifying either in his eſtimate, or which is practiſed from a ſenſe of his authority over us, and a regard to the reward we may reaſonably expect to receive from him. Thus *Zecharias* and *Elizabeth* are deſcrib'd as righteous * *before God:* and the apoſtle † *Paul*, when he had bleſſed God even the Father, for the favours he had conferr'd on the *Epheſians* thro Jeſus Chriſt, he adds, *According as he hath choſen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we might be holy and unblameable before him.*

AND if the latter interpretation ſhou'd be thought by any not to be the true one, on account that the term ‡ *before*, in theſe places, differs from that which has the ſame rendring in our text, παρὰ; yet religion, which in its common uſe has ever been ſuppos'd neceſſarily to imply a reſpect to God when pure and undefiled before God, in his unerring judgment, muſt unavoidably include in it a regard to his authority, a reſpect to his favour, and a recompence of reward from him. I come now,

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* Luke 1. 6. † Epheſ. 1. 4. ‡ Ἐνώπιον, κατενώπιον.

III. TO

III. TO prove that herein true religion conſiſts, which I ſhall do,

(1.) BY reaſon, and the nature of things. And,

(2.) BY revelation.

(1.) BY reaſon and the nature of things.

THE variety of beings which compoſe the ſtructure of the world, and are form'd with ſuch exquiſite skill, leads us to the acknowledgment of a firſt intelligent cauſe, every way perfect, and conſequently righteous and good. And ſince we are capable of religion, we cannot doubt but that the moſt acceptable way of ſerving God muſt be by conſtant endeavours to be like him in his imitable perfections, and eſpecially in being and doing good. This temper and conduct impart to us the excellency and happineſs peculiar to our reaſonable make, and ſo muſt be of eternal obligation upon us, and greatly pleaſing to the higheſt Goodneſs. The order of the frame of things we converſe with, wherein the ſeveral ranks of beings are ſerviceable to each other, and perpetually carry on the beauty and perfection

of the whole, clearly evinces that it is fit reaſonable beings ſhould be of choice diffuſively beneficial to one another. To this our make and ſtate ſtrongly incite us. We come into the world weak, and deſtitute of power to help our ſelves, and for a longer time than the creatures below us; and ſo become oblig'd early to goodneſs, by the tendereſt expreſſions of affection ſhewn to our ſelves. In our frame appear a ſtrong bent to ſociety, and an uneaſy emotion at the view of great diſtreſs in others, ſo that it is a kind of eaſe to our ſelves to adminiſter relief to them. The ſtate we are in, by a variety of changes, renders us expos'd to many afflictions: and if we expect compaſſion and ſupport in ſuch circumſtances, it is but equitable we ſhould expreſs the ſame to others when under the like tryals.

AS the firſt part of the deſcription the apoſtle gives of true religion, is by theſe arguments which are taken from the nature of things, clearly demonſtrated; ſo the other, *viz. to keep himſelf unſpotted from the world*, in the ſame manner, and with equal clearneſs, may eaſily be made to appear.

THE gratification of our ſenſual appetites to an exceſſive degree, as if our minds were

were given us for no other purpoſe than to cater for the body, and make proviſion for the fleſh, is debaſing our nature, and demeaning our ſelves below the rank we hold in the creation. Intemperance enervates the mind, and abates the vigorous exerciſe of it, whereby we are rais'd above the brutes; which is highly incongruous and unbecoming. Exceſs in the uſe of ſpirituous liquors often puts men out of the direction and government of themſelves, and renders them juſtly the objects of contempt. Beſides, immoderate indulgence of our appetites has a tendency to give narrow and contracted views to the mind, limit and confine its regards to ſelf, and indiſpoſe to a generous and extenſive goodneſs to others.

WILD and outrageous paſſions, with great and unnatural violence, diſplace reaſon from the power and command which the wiſe Creator deſign'd it ſhould always have over our conduct, introduce convulſive diſorders and frightful deformity, tear up in their impetuous fury all friendly and tender diſpoſitions, and occaſion a temper as well as behaviour ſuſpicious and miſtruſtful, narrow and invidious, ſavage and inhuman, cruel and revengeful: and how diſagreeable ſuch characters are to the nature of God, and our reaſonable frame, at firſt

view appears too evident to need a labour'd proof. Thus the light of nature * clearly proves that goodneſs and ſelf-government conſtitute true religion: and to this purpoſe many paſſages occur in the writings of the wiſeſt heathens. But this will farther appear,

(2.) BY revelation, and expreſs places of ſcripture.

WHEN *Job* vindicates his integrity, he gives a beautiful deſcription of religion, in drawing his own character. † *If I have with-held the poor from their deſire, or have cauſed the eyes of the widow to fail: if I have ſeen any periſh for want of clothing, or any poor without covering: if his loins have not bleſſed me, and if he*

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* *Sicut nec in victimis quidem licet opima ſunt, auroque prafulgeant, deorum eſt honos, ſed piâ ac rectâ voluntate venerantium. Itaque boni etiam farre ac fitilla religioſi ſunt.* V. Sen. Lipſ. Ed. p. 166.

Animadverto enim etiam Deos non tam accuratis adorantium precibus quam innocentiâ & ſanctitate latari; gratioremque exiſtimari, qui delubris eorum puram caſtamque mentem, quam qui meditatum carmen intulerit. V. Plin. in Panegyr.

Quin damus id ſuperis de magna quod dare lance,
Non poſſit magni Meſſalæ lippa propago,
Compoſitum jus faſque animi ſanctoſque receſſus
Mentis, & incoctum generoſo pectus honeſto?
Hæc cedo ut admoveam templis, & farre litabo. Perſ. Sat. 2da.

To theſe many other paſſages of the like nature (if needful) might eaſily be added.

† Job 31. 16, 19, &c.

were

were not warmed with the fleece of my ſheep; if I have lift up my hand againſt the fatherleſs, when I ſaw my help in the gate; then let mine arm fall from my ſhoulder-blade. ** *If I have made gold my hope, or ſaid to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence: if I rejoiced becauſe my wealth was great, and becauſe mine hand had gotten much.*

GOODNESS to the * fatherleſs, ſtranger and widow, was recommended in the law; and to induce the Jews to the practice of it, they were often reminded of being themſelves ſlaves in *Egypt*. When they falſely imagined that ſacrifices and purifications would avail without real virtue, God ſent his prophets to declare to them, that without inward holineſs, † *He that killed an ox, is as if he ſlew a man: he that ſacrificed, as if he cut off a dog's neck: he that offered an oblation, as if he offered ſwines blood*; and to exhort them to true repentance, and a return to the practice of duties *good in themſelves*, wherein pure religion and undefil'd conſiſted. The prophet *Micah*, when he had call'd upon the mountains to hear the controverſy of the Lord with his people *Iſrael*, ‡ *O my*

** Ver. 24. * Deut. 16. 11, 12. † Iſa. 66. 3.
‡ Mic. 6. 8.

people,

people, what have I done unto thee, wherein have I wearied thee? teſtify againſt me; introduces in the moſt elegant and beautiful manner the people touch'd with a ſenſe of guilt, with anxiety enquiring, *Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord, and bow my ſelf before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? will the Lord be pleaſed with thouſands of rams, or ten thouſands of rivers of oil? ſhall I give my firſt-born for my tranſgreſſion, the fruit of my body for the ſin of my ſoul?* To which the prophet replies, *He hath ſhewed thee, o man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* †

WHEN the Son of God appear'd, to give the moſt perfect revelation, he reproached the ſcribes and phariſees, who blamed his followers for neglecting to waſh their hands when they eat bread, that they had wickedly fruſtrated the commandment of God, *Honour thy father and mother*; when they inſtructed them, ‡ *if a man ſhall ſay to his father and mother it is Corban,*

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* Mic. 6. 8. † Deut. 10. 12. ‡ Mar. 7. 11.

that

that is to ſay, a gift, by whatſoever thou mighteſt be profited by me, he ſhall be free; thus making the word of God of none effect thro tradition. * *Ye hypocrites, well did* Iſaiah *propheſy of you, ſaying, this people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; but in vain they do worſhip me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.* Our Lord convers'd with publicans and ſinners, and gave offence thereby to the phariſees: in vindicating this his conduct he recommends them to one of their † prophets, *I will have mercy, and not* (that is, rather than) *ſacrifice*, tho a divine inſtitution. And in regard that while they were exact and ſcrupulous, in paying *tithe of mint, and anniſe, and cummin, they omitted the weightier things of the law, judgment, mercy and faith* **, he denounces a terrible woe againſt them.

IN the ſermon, which our Saviour deſign'd to be the rule his diſciples ſhould follow in their conduct, he expreſly declares that except their *righteouſneſs exceeds that of the phariſees*, which conſiſted in external obſervances, *they ſhould in no caſe enter into the king-*

* Mat. 15. 7, 8, 9.
** Mat. 23. 23, 24.
† Mat. 9. 13. Hoſ. 6. 6.

dom of heaven; and recommends to them purity of heart and extenſive goodneſs even to enemies, making that excellency in God our pattern and example: * *Be ye perfect*, or ‡ merciful, *even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.* The apoſtles who received their commiſſion and authority from Chriſt to teach the goſpel, conſtantly deliver'd the ſame doctrine, aſſuring them to whom they preached, that the intention of the Meſſias's appearance was to reform mankind, and *purify to himſelf a peculiar people zealous of good works*; and that the general view of his inſtitution was, that thoſe who embraced it, † *denying all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, might live ſoberly, righteouſly and godlily in this preſent world*; *looking for that bleſſed hope*: to which ſacred and important purpoſes every part thereof is admirably adapted.

AND now having ſo fully prov'd by the nature of things, and plain citations from ſcripture, that *pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to viſit the fatherleſs and widows in their affliction, and to keep himſelf unſpotted from the world*; I proceed,

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* Mat. 5. 48. ‡ Luke 6. 36. † Tit. 2. 12.

IV. TO conſider the moſt material occaſions, which may reaſonably be ſuppos'd to have given riſe to contrary ſentiments.

1. THEY are greatly owing to a neglect of the uſe of reaſon, which is given us by our Creator to attain juſt apprehenſions of religion. Our reaſon, which alone renders us capable of being religious, if duly exerciſed, will, by tracing effects to their cauſes, lead us to God, the firſt cauſe, who is intelligent, and give us ſome idea (tho incomplete) of the perfections he poſſeſſes in himſelf underiv'd; inſtruct us (in ſome degree at leaſt) in the knowledge of good and evil, and the obligations which ariſe from the relation we ſtand in to God, and others; inform us of the ſanction of the law of nature, appearing in the ſatisfaction we find when we perform what is agreeable thereto, and the uneaſineſs which attends the contrary practice; or, in other words, teach us to form right conceptions of religion. But remarks on mankind will convince us that this gift of God has unhappily been neglected, and ſomething elſe, contrary to the deſign of our wiſe Creator, introduced in its room, to direct and guide our purſuits of religion; and here commence the dan-

gerous miſtakes which have been entertained concerning it.

SINCE we are made to dwell in a world of ſenſible objects, our great Creator has in infinite wiſdom given us a frame and contexture of body exactly ſuited to it, and a power of fancy to put together and aſſemble the images of paſt and abſent objects, attended with a mixture of the paſſions, which enter into our make, to anſwer the purpoſes of our preſent ſtate. Here, as in all nature, a remarkable variety appears: ſome by their conſtitutions are gay and ſprightly, others reſerv'd and gloomy; and according to their different complexions, they form their conceptions of God: one apprehending him to be tamely good, and another inexorably ſevere; on which account men become diſpos'd to numerous ſuperſtitious rites of worſhip: *Thou* thoughteſt I was altogether ſuch a one as thy ſelf*; to which the heat of imagination, peculiar to the make of ſome perſons, has not a little contributed: whereas bodily temper and livelineſs of fancy were to be under management; and it was only reaſon, our higher power, which was given us by our kind Creator, to lead us into the knowledge of the beſt

* Pſal. 50. 21.

manner

manner of worſhipping him acceptably; and not attending to its pure and ſimple dictates, has been one conſiderable occaſion of pernicious errors in religion.

2. ANOTHER occaſion of ſuch miſtakes has been *fear*, ariſing from conſciouſneſs of guilt, and attended with anxious and reſtleſs deſires to appeaſe the offended Deity, when thro degeneracy and vice the underſtanding in a great meaſure is rendered unfit to diſcern things in a juſt and proper light.

WHATEVER falſe apprehenſions of religion are admitted, the obligations to juſtice and humanity, and a due regard to our Maker, lie ſo obvious, that when they are violated in remarkable inſtances, our power of reflection, eſpecially if awakened by calamity and diſtreſs, gives us uneaſy girds. To remove the anguiſh which ariſes thence, the guilty mind reſtleſsly caſts about, wherewithal ſhall I come before him whom I have ſo highly incens'd? And ſince a courſe of vice naturally darkens the underſtanding, and renders it leſs capable of forming a right judgment; it is no wonder at ſuch a time, when a motion of the paſſions occaſions a tumultuous and diſturb'd ſtate of mind, that magnificent temples, coſtly oblations, expenſive ſacrifices, and the like,

like, ſuited to their own genius, ſhould be fix'd upon to atone God, whom they are conſcious of having greatly offended. To this we muſt undoubtedly aſcribe not only the pompous, but the barbarous ceremonies of ſacrificing men and their own offspring, often practiſed among the heathens.

3. THE laſt conſiderable occaſion of corruptions in religion, is a deſire which many have of commuting the matter with the divine Being, and inſtead of parting with their vices and practiſing real virtue, admitting what they groundleſly imagine to be an equivalent. To this may juſtly be referred the words of the prophet, * *Truſt ye not to lying words, ſaying, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are theſe: for if you thorowly amend your ways and your doings; if you thorowly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppreſs not the ſtranger, the fatherleſs and the widow, and ſhed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt; then will I cauſe you to dwell in this place*, &c.

* Jer. 7. 4, 5, 6,

IF it will not be allowed in a juſt eſtimate, that a vicious courſe is attended with a genuine pleaſure; yet that there is a preſent eaſe in gratifying a ſtrong appetite, and yielding to a violent paſſion, cannot be deny'd: and when habits of any ſort are fixed by repeated acts, a kind of pleaſure ariſes from what we have been long accuſtomed to, and a pain on the contrary: when the habits are criminal, the like real difficulty of practiſing true religion, unavoidably reſults.

THE minds, however, of ſuch, if allowed to think, will eaſily diſcern the eternal obligation of real piety and virtue, to which they have contracted indiſpoſitions, ſo deeply rooted, that they conceive them unconquerable; and not being able to lay aſide all religious ſentiments and practices (for reaſonable creatures are made for religion) they are willing to ſubſtitute in the place of real religion ſomething elſe, which may be more eaſy to them in their preſent circumſtance: an accurate knowledge of ſchemes, and a zeal in their defence; a peculiar dreſs, and particular ſet of phraſes, and the like. From this principle many have raiſed large edifices, and endow'd them, vainly dreaming that by ſuch a conduct they ſhall cover a long train of fraudulent, oppreſſive, and cruel actions.

VI

V. I SHALL now conclude with proper and ſutable application.

1. THIS diſcourſe ſhould excite in us great care to avoid (as much as poſſibly we can) the errors whereby religion becomes leſs pure before God and the Father.

SOME, without any juſt reaſon, have imagin'd that the different ways of worſhipping the ſupreme Being, how trifling and ceremonious ſoever, which have prevailed among mankind, are grateful to him on the account of their variety; which ſentiment, how clearly ſoever it may evince the great indifferency that ſuch who eſpouſe it have to religion, carries in it unbecoming apprehenſions of the divine Being. 'Tis true indeed, that * *God is no reſpecter of perſons, but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteouſneſs, is accepted with him*; and his infinite goodneſs will make all proper allowances to the circumſtance of his creatures: and yet, to conceive that an heedleſs worſhip of God, as education and the cuſtom of the country we live in direct,

* Acts 10. 34, 35.

and

and a thoughtful ſervice performed in the beſt manner we can, ariſing from our own make and the relation we ſtand in to God and others, will be equally pleaſing to our Creator; is ſo unworthy of God and diſagreeing to the nature of things, that it is to be preſumed no perſon upon reflection will venture to maintain it.

THAT we therefore faithfully uſe our powers in the beſt way we can to attain the knowledge of pure religion, and guard againſt the errors which corrupt it, muſt be of conſiderable importance. To theſe purpoſes God has in his abundant goodneſs favoured us with a revelation by his Son, the cleareſt and moſt perfect: let us conſtantly attend to it. There we ſhall be fully inſtructed, that not faith, not knowledge, not devotion, not poſitive inſtitutions, which are *means* of pure religion, will avail, unleſs perfected in real and inward holineſs, in the love of God, and extenſive charity to men; their proper *end*. There we ſhall clearly learn that the ſimpleſt worſhip is moſt ſuited to the nature of God, and introducing ceremonies contrary to its true genius. For this reaſon *James* calls the goſpel * *the perfect law of liberty*; and

* Jam. 1. 25.

the apoſtle *Paul* frequently exhorts, to * *ſtand faſt in the liberty wherewith Chriſt has made us free.*

IF in plea for ceremonies it be ſaid, that they are indifferent, why are they not left in their natural indifferency? Beſides, if the character of being indifferent will vindicate their introduction into the worſhip of God, what boundaries can be fix'd? May not the chriſtian doctrine become as burdenſom as the law? Farther, the right of making things and actions, which are indifferent, the neceſſary terms of communion in religious worſhip, beſides and contrary to the inſtitution of Chriſt, or in other words, of altering the nature of things and chriſtianity, had need, with great clearneſs and ſtrength of argument, be made out; as alſo to whom that right belongs, I doubt, will be found a right that magiſtrates, upon reflection, will not ſee reaſon to claim: their province is to ſecure the civil rights of mankind, and guard the peace of the community. And if it ſhould be thought that the maintaining peace in a ſociety will of courſe draw after it a right of *preſcribing* one way of worſhipping God, with a variety of ceremonies, no perſon, who has made any conſiderable ob-

* Gal. 5. 1.

 ſervation,

ſervation, but will find that this method has been the occaſion of unhappy diſturbances, while every one has not been allow'd the liberty of ſerving his great Creator, in the manner which he apprehends moſt acceptable to him, without any civil diſcouragement. Concord is moſt likely to ariſe from the ſimpleſt worſhip, form'd by a careful regard to the light of nature and plain chriſtianity.

SINCE then the happineſs of men, relating to this life, is alone the intention of civil government, are we not to be left entirely to our own choice, to ſerve God according to our beſt light? Or if it were otherwiſe, could we expect acceptance and a reward from him (which in religious worſhip muſt be in view) in a future world?

THE moſt plauſible argument to ſupport the right of the magiſtrate, in matters of religion, is, that God appointed a great number of ceremonies to the *Jews*, as he ſtood in the relation of a king to them. To this may be anſwer'd, that then they were civil laws, and to be regarded as expreſſions of allegiance to him; and one would hardly apprehend that God deſign'd the law of *Moſes*, ſtrictly taken, ſhould be look'd upon as religion, in the greateſt propriety of the word, when there was not,

as I think, any expreſs ſpiritual promiſes annex'd to it. Farther, that conſtitution was deſign'd with peculiar views to prepare the appearance of the Son of God, and diſtinguiſh him by ſuch marks as, when he ſhould come, might give conviction that he was truly the Meſſias: but when he did appear, he declared in the name of the Father, that *his kingdom was not of this world, that* * *the hour cometh when ye ſhall neither in this mountain, nor yet at* Jeruſalem, *worſhip the Father*; that is, no longer ſhall particular places be ſacred to the divine worſhip; *the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worſhippers ſhall worſhip the Father in ſpirit and in truth: and they that worſhip him muſt worſhip him in ſpirit and truth.* To ſhew a change in the conſtitution, when the apoſtle *Paul* had mentioned that *he that deſpiſed* Moſes's *law dy'd without mercy, under two or three witneſſes*; leſt they ſhould apprehend the ſame conduct was to be uſed under the chriſtian religion, he varies the expreſſion: † *Of how much ſorer puniſhment, ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy? and we know him that hath ſaid, vengeance belongeth to me, I will recompenſe, ſaith the Lord. And again, the Lord ſhall judge his people. It*

* John 4. 21. † Heb. 10. 28, 29, 30.

is

is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

SINCE then our Saviour has freed us from rites, and given us a plain inſtitution, recommending by *divine authority*, a ſpiritual worſhip; why ſhould chriſtian magiſtrates preſume to alter the ſimplicity of it? Is not that in effect calling into queſtion the perfection of the chriſtian doctrine? Does it not imply great diſingenuity to God, for the favour of being under the laſt and moſt complete revelation, which all the preceding diſcoveries were deſign'd chiefly to introduce, attended with perſpicuity and true freedom, and worthy the Son of God to eſtabliſh? Is it not at any time, but more peculiarly in ſuch a ſituation, highly unfit to make a religion for God, and greatly incongruous to *preſcribe* one to others, beſides what abſurdity the making a religion for another unavoidably includes? If it be ſaid that ceremonies regard only external polity, can we think that Chriſt is not a perfect lawgiver, that ſomething elſe ſhould be ſuppoſed neceſſary to finiſh his conſtitution? If it be pleaded that ſuch mixtures endanger not ſalvation; true, but then it ſeems we are not to be ſollicitous to ſerve God in the *beſt* way we can, in the way that comes neareſt to the *moſt perfect law*

of

of liberty: and what is the conſequence? Is not zeal for ceremonies, by the bulk of mankind, put for real and intrinſick holineſs; and the vigour of the mind waſted in the defence of them, in a manner which is not always (to ſay no worſe) the moſt religious?

2. LET us with conſtant diligence purſue true and undefiled religion, and endeavour to arrive to greater perfection therein: let us ſteddily avoid all exceſs of ſenſual pleaſure and predominancy of paſſion, and carefully ſubdue our lower powers to the reaſon of our mind, enlightned with the divine word: let us faithfully preſs after higher degrees of real and inward purity. To excite us to this, let us conſider the unhappy conſequences of irreligion on the one ſide, and the agreeable effects of pure religion and undefiled on the other. How much diſſervice does irreligion occaſion to all the trueſt intereſts which we can have in our view? how does it weaken the frame of our body, enfeeble our mind, ſtain our reputation, raiſe dreadful tempeſts within, deprive us of inward peace, render us hateful to others, and, which is worſe, to our great Creator; and expoſe us, if not ſincerely repented of, to his * *wrath, which*

* Rom. 1. 18.

is revealed from heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men, who hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs? On the contrary, how fair and beautiful are the fruits which ariſe out of pure religion and undefiled? how does it perfect our nature, and make it godlike? what true * pleaſure and real ſatisfaction does it impart? how much does it ſecure the good opinion of our fellow-creatures, and (which is infinitely more to be valu'd) the favour of our heavenly Father, thro the mediation of our bleſſed Redeemer? What bravery is it capable of inſpiring, when hereby the mind, in the midſt of raging tempeſts, can direct, with a tranquillity and calmneſs truly divine? What juſt and well-grounded aſſurance does it give us, when we are remov'd out of this world, of a reception into a ſtate of perfect happineſs? Let us † *therefore, my beloved brethren, be ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, foraſmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in Lord*; ‡ *giving all diligence,*

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* *Nam cum animus, cognitis perceptiſq; virtutibus, a corporis obſequio, indulgentiaq; diſceſſerit, voluptatemq; ſicut labem aliquam dedecoris oppreſſerit, omnemq; mortis doloriſq; timorem effugerit, ſocietatemq; carnis ejecerit; tum ſuis omnibuſq; natura conjunctos ſuos duxerit, cultumq; deorum & puram religionem ſuſceperit, & exacuerit ut oculorum ſic ingenii aciem ——quid eo dici aut excogitari poterit beatius?* Cic. de leg. p. 317. Oct. Rob. St. G.

† 1 Cor. 15. 58. ‡ 2 Pet. 1. 5, 6, 7, 11.

add

add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godlineſs, and to godlineſs brotherly kindneſs, and to brotherly kindneſs charity; for ſo an entrance ſhall be miniſtred unto you abundantly, into the everlaſting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.

BRITISH MUSEUM

FINIS.

Juſt publiſhed in Octavo, Sermons againſt Popery, by the late Reverend Mr. John Billingſley, *on the following Subjects.*

OF the Right of the People to read the Scriptures.
Of the Perfection of the Holy Scriptures, as the Rule of Faith, of Life, and of Worſhip.
The Holy Scriptures not dependent on the Authority of the Church for their Credibility.
Of the Infallibility of the Church of *Rome*; and of the Judge of Controverſy.
Of the Head of the Church.
Of Obedience, due from Eccleſiaſticks as well as others, to lawful Governours.
Of Anti-chriſt. Of Schiſm. Of the Marks of a true Church.
Of religious Worſhip due only to God, and not to Saints and Angels.
Of Purgatory. No Sins venial. Againſt the Merit of good Works. Againſt Works of Supererogation. Of Juſtification by Faith. Of Idolatry.
Againſt religious Service in an unknown Tongue.
Againſt the Doctrine of Indulgences. Of the Celibacy of the Clergy. Of Aſſurance. The Sacraments in the Chriſtian Religion, not more than two. Againſt Tranſubſtantiation.
Of the Tyranny and Sacrilege of the Church of *Rome*, in denying the Cup in the Sacrament to her Laity.
Of the Sacrifice of the Maſs.
Implicit Faith, inconſiſtent with Chriſtian Principles.

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